

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL/HYBRID
ARLINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

05/28/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:01 PM** on **05/28/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON)

- Caroline Haynes
- Bob Benson
- Stephen Sockwell
- David Howell
- Jenn Hazen
- Bill Browning
- Josh Handler
- Alex Sanders
- Neal Hunter
- Erik Beach
- Noreen Hannigan

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)

- Connor Goolsby
- John Carey

ABSENT

- Phil Klingelhofer
- Lisa Marcellus

STAFF

- Andrew Benjamin (DPR)
- Jen Soles (DPR)
- Richard Dooley (CPO)
- Jennifer Fioretti (CPO)
- Erik Beach (DPR)
- Leslie Fillmore (Extension)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments

Marissa Willson introduced herself, but did not have comment.

Climate Action Plan – Rich Dooley

Rich Dooley presented on the Climate Action Plan

Discussion:

- Concerns brought up regarding lack of gas-powered leaf blower ban (seconded by second commissioner), heat island effect and high-density development, further concerns regarding high-density development and lack of nature-based designs and solutions also concerns about tree preservation not being prioritized
 - Jen addressed potential gas-powered leaf blower ban
 - Rich addressed ways heat island can be addressed within the scope of the initiative
 - Josh brought up the timeline about 18 months of implementation vs. 3 years
- David discussed concerns about the limits of GLUP and participation of GBIP. Cross-department coordination for larger action being taken
- Desire for more investment in private tree planting by County government
 - Jenn F commented that continuing efforts will be informed by existing recommendations in FNRP

Invasive Plant Management Update – Jennifer Soles

Jennifer Soles presented on the Invasive plant program

Discussion:

- David asked to clarify funding sources for reintroducing native plants
- Multiple questions about ways to achieve sustained funding and increased costs from inflation
- Noreen asked about potential for volunteers being allowed to apply pesticides

Capital Improvement Plan – Erik Beach

Erik Beach presented on the Capital Improvement Plan.

Discussion:

- Bob asked about the process of land acquisition. Erik explained resources and criteria used to prioritize
- Neal asked about negative values on acquisition table and VDOT purchase
- Caroline brought up June 2nd deadline for comments for CIP

Caroline motioned to approve the letter, seconded by David. Unanimously adopted.

Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles

Bob explained FNRC input letter to Long Range Planning Committee and potential letter Planning Commission regarding update to comprehensive plan

Bob made motion to draft letter to Planning Commission. Seconded by Bill Browning

- Discussion: David brought up lack of nature or biophilia in guiding principles of the comprehensive plan and potential for synergy with nature-based solutions to stated goals. Steve spoke about Portland Oregon comp plan that focuses on environmental health. Several people voiced concerns about shortfalls of large-scale interdepartmental goals and lack of nature-focused language

The letter was Unanimously approved

April minutes and Staff Reports

April minutes unanimously approved

Commission Member Reports (Taken in order of Action Items first)

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

At the May 4 NRJAG meeting we had a productive discussion focusing on better coordination among the three commissions (FNRC, PRC and C2E2) in various planning processes, especially where our interests overlap. Suggestions were made to improve communication, for example by sharing letters and comments with our counterparts on the other commissions to get a better understanding of the issues of concern to each commission. We also discussed priorities in the upcoming CIP, including natural resilience funding, noting letters from both FNRC and PRC for long-term planning and funding for invasive species management.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

The Parks and Recreation Commission met on Tuesday, May 19. The Commission heard public comment on the need to continue a walking path on 9th Street North (through the Virginia Square area) to 10th Street North. We next heard from Erik Beach on the Capital Improvement Plan; the FNRC will hear a similar report in its May meeting. We also heard a report on the community gardens in Arlington- their use, management and relationship with the County. The PRC is particularly interested in whether community gardens are feasible to include as requests for developers in site plans. Last, we bid farewell to our chair, Jill Barker, who is departing at the end of May.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The PSMP Implementation Advisory Group will meet on Wednesday, May 27 at Walter Reed Community Center, followed by a community open house from 7-8:30 PM. We anticipate a presentation on the results of the statistically valid survey, as well as an update on the implementation of the existing PSMP. As noted previously, this update will be focusing on a limited scope of issues including inventory update, level of service, needs assessment, land acquisition and consistency with adopted plans.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

Planning Activities/SPRC

David Howell: The first SRRC from the proposed VHC Behavioral Wellness Center—now titled VHC Health-South Campus—was held on May 18. The staff report is attached, below.

This services to be provided by this proposed facility are long anticipated and widely supported by the county, VHC, other interests in the community, the surrounding neighborhood, and other commission. The primary challenges relate to how the facility should/could fit well into the site, and how to make both the facility and its use compatible with nearby residents, park users, Carlin Springs Rd traffic, and the local ecology. Because of the importance of the location, and because the project is now moving quickly, I wrote comments to the staff lead, Courtney Badger, and asked that those be forwarded to VHC. I also send that same commentary to other staff, PRC, C2E2, and PC members, noting that I was writing as an individual. Those comments were sent on May 6 and 7, and I am attaching that text below.

The SPRC discussion included land use, open space and landscaping, and site design, layout, circulation. It was an appropriate mix of topics for the first SPRC, particularly considering the opportunities on the site for the community and VHC. The second SPRC is not scheduled but the staff report, written well before the SPRC, says it is anticipated for June. Whether that would be before or after our FNRC meeting, or in July, is uncertain.

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

A Motion was made by Stephen Sockwell to approve John Carey letter to transportation subject to amendment. Seconded by David, and approved unanimously.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria are assisting EcoAction Arlington by providing home visits for Arlington residents who want to apply for trees through the tree/shrub planting program. An applicant can request a Tree Steward visit to look at the yard, answer questions, and advise on "right tree/right place." (For further information, see the Tree Canopy Report.)

A group of Tree Stewards assisted with an "applied-nucleation-style" planting on the hill behind the Fairlington Community Center. County staff (Sue Kim and Vincent Verweij) provided the trees, the tools, the deer fencing material, and the guidance to volunteers who planted seven clusters of native trees in hopes of reducing the now-open lawn where mature trees once stood. Habitat-restoration and tree/shrub planting work continued at Grandma's Creek, Dominion Hills, and Fort Scott.

And lastly, Tree Stewards were treated to a very informative visit and talk at the Arlington County Native Plant Nursery. Sue Kim, Natural Resources Technician who manages the nursery, delved into how she chooses which trees species to propagate (from seed), traits of different species and why those are appropriate for Arlington sites, and how she decides what should be planted where. She gave an overview of Arlington's topography, soils, etc., and the naturally occurring plant communities she is trying to restore. The group then walked over to nearby Barcroft Park to see trees and shrubs that have been planted in the natural areas along the stream there and see how they are doing on site.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

The application period for Arlington residents to apply for trees and shrubs from EcoAction Arlington is open now, and will close on July 15th. Applicants can request a home visit by a Tree Steward if unsure of what to plant.

<https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/community-programs/tree-program-overview/>

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

ARMN participated in this year's City Nature Challenge in late April. The CNC, a global bioblitz, included 754 metropolitan areas in 61 countries. ARMN's submissions were rolled into the DC Metropolitan Area group, which came in #3 for observers and #6 for observations. Nearly 80 ARMN members identified 1,103 species and contribute 6,519 observations this year.

ARMN members began to develop an ARMN "project" to support DPR collaboration with Arlington Public Schools. We collected data on tree planting locations and invasive infestation at three schools (Oakridge, Gunston, and Wakefield). ARMN will review these results in June with staff (schools and county) to discuss next steps in this effort.

ARMN members continued to support the FNRC in its representation on several Site Plan Review Committees (SPRCs)

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

No report

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Lisa Marcellus)

No report

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

The Arlington Traditional School (formerly McKinley ES) Project includes stormwater improvements with new trees.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Nothing to report

New business

Bob Benson suggested adding an item to a future agenda on House bill 549.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 **PM**.